



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

CECW-ON

13 MAR 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Recreation Day Use Fee Program

1. This memorandum provides policy guidance on the collection of recreation day use fees at Civil Works water resource projects.

2. Reference: ER 1130-2-550, Chapter 9 – Recreation Use Fees.

3. Collection of recreation day use fees.

a. The referenced ER provides guidance for the collection of day use fees on a per facility basis. This guidance remains current and valid.

b. As an alternative to collecting fees on a per facility basis, day use fees may be collected on a per recreation area basis, in accordance with the following:

(1) A single fee may be assessed and collected for the use of any combination or all day use facilities within a designated recreation fee area.

(2) The fee is a use fee, not an entrance fee. Golden Age and Golden Access Passports discounts apply. Golden Eagle Passports are not valid for these fees.

(3) The fee will be established at \$3 per vehicle or \$1 per person, if walking into the area.

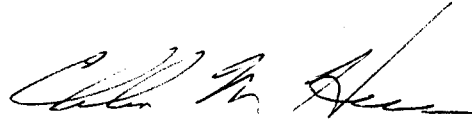
(4) The annual day use pass will cover these fees.

c. Fees will be assessed either on a per facility basis or a per recreation area basis at any particular area. Both alternatives will not be used within a single area.

d. The guidance provided herein supplements, but does not change, existing guidance in ER 1130-2-550 regarding the day use fee program.

4. The CECW-ON point of contact for the Recreation Use Fee Program is Judy Rice, (202) 761-1795.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles M. Hess", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

CHARLES M. HESS  
Chief, Operations Division  
Directorate of Civil Works

## Day Use Fee Collection Alternative Qs and As

**1. Question:** Why are we instituting this charging alternative? What's in it for the Corps?

**Answer:** In many cases, charging a single fee for the use of all day use facilities in an area is much simpler to administer and enforce. The fee collector does not have to determine which facilities the visitor intends to use before computing the fee. This expedites the fee collection process, reducing customer delays on busy summer days. Enforcement issues are reduced, since all users in that area pay the same fee.

**2. Question:** Under this alternative some of our customers who never paid a fee before may now pay a fee for the same recreation experience. Similarly, some of our customers will pay a higher fee than before for the same activity. What do we tell them?

**Answer:** This alternative increases our efficiency and cost effectiveness in managing our areas, which is good stewardship of our appropriated funds. The fee payment process is simpler and faster, reducing customer delays in having their recreation experience. These fees were originally authorized in accordance with a "user pay" philosophy, which holds that users should pay for the services received. This alternative provides greater equity in the day use fee program, in that a greater proportion of users are paying for the recreation services they receive. Further, the nominal increase in fees reflects increased costs of doing business over time. Day use fees were first established in 1994 and have not been increased since then. The cost to operate and maintain recreation sites and facilities, however, has increased during that 6 year period proportionately with the cost of living.

We should also actively educate the public to the potential cost savings of annual passes and maximize their availability for sale at collection points.

**3. Question:** Is this fee collection alternative consistent with the legislative authority?

**Answer:** Yes. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, PL 103-66, authorized the Corps to charge a fee for the use of certain developed day use recreation facilities. An Office of Counsel opinion, dated 24 August 1994, determined that charging a single fee for the use of all day use facilities within a developed recreation area is within our legislated authorities.

**4. Question:** How is this fee different than an entrance fee?

**Answer:** An entrance fee must be paid by all visitors prior to their entering a park or recreation area, regardless of the availability of developed facilities. The Corps does not

have authority to charge entrance fees; we do have authority to charge use fees for day use facilities. This fee is for the use of any or all of the day use facilities in the recreation area. A person may enter the area for purposes other than active recreation without paying the fee. If, however, they intend to use any recreation facilities or combination of facilities, they will pay the fee.

**5. Question:** Why should we wait until 2001 to begin charging this fee?

**Answer:** This alternative collection method may be used at the field's discretion. You may, if you prefer, continue to charge on a per-facility basis. If, however, you choose to implement this alternative, some visitors may be paying a fee who did not pay fees previously. Some visitors will be paying a higher fee than they did previously. It is important to prepare our visitors for this change in advance, rather than surprising them the first time they visit this year. Although this is always an important issue, this is an election year, and Congress may be very sensitive to constituent complaints. WRDA 2000 includes proposed legislation to expand the recreation use fee program and extend our authority to retain a portion of the collections. Significant public complaint this summer could jeopardize that legislation. It may also be necessary to modify your fee collection signage, infrastructure and procedures to accommodate this alternative, which will take some time.

**6. Question:** Will the sign standards manual and software be changed to accommodate this alternative?

**Answer:** Yes. The Sign Standards Workgroup will provide additional guidance to cover this issue.

**7. Question:** The policy memo states that the per area use fee will be established at \$3 per vehicle. Must the fee for all areas be set at \$3?

**Answer:** No. The fee may be set at a lesser amount, but may not exceed \$3 per vehicle.

**8. Question:** For what kinds of areas should this alternative, as opposed to per facility charging, be selected?

**Answer:** Areas which are developed with facilities to accommodate a variety of uses are most appropriate for this alternative. Picnicking facilities, in particular, should be combined with other facilities to justify this fee. An area having only picnic tables, potable water, and restrooms would not be appropriate for charging. If, however, additional facilities such as trails, playgrounds, ball fields, amphitheaters or other developed facilities are available in the area, a fee would be appropriate.

**9. Question:** Are there any day use recreation areas at which a per area fee should not be charged?

**Answer:** Yes. If an area has only a boat ramp, a courtesy dock, drinking water and a restroom, a per facility fee is probably most appropriate. Similarly, if an area has only a designated swimming beach, with no picnic facilities, boat ramp or other developed facilities, a per facility fee should probably be charged. We may not, by law, charge for the use of an area providing drinking water, wayside exhibits, roads, scenic drives, overlook sites, picnic tables, toilet facilities, surface water areas, undeveloped or lightly developed shoreland, or general visitor information, either singly or in combination, unless other developed recreation facilities are also provided in that area.

**10. Question:** Would a customer ever be charged a per facility fee, ie a \$2 boat ramp use fee, within an area designated for per area charging?

**Answer:** No. If an area is designated for per area charging, users of any or all facilities within that area would pay the established per area fee. There can be no adjustment based upon number of persons in the vehicle.

**11. Question:** If a visitor just wants to picnic in an area designated for per area charging, does he/she pay the fee?

**Answer:** Yes. He/she will be using day use facilities within the park, to include support facilities such as restrooms, trash receptacles, playground equipment, etc.

**12. Question:** If a visitor just wants to drive through an area designated for per fee charging, does he/she pay the fee?

**Answer:** No. Visitors who only wish to drive through the park for sightseeing should be allowed to do so without being charged a fee.

**13. Question:** If a visitor just wants to walk through the area for pleasure or exercise, does he/she pay the fee?

**Answer:** No. Persons walking for pleasure would not reasonably be expected to use recreation facilities provided in the area and should be allowed to do so without being charged a fee.

**14. Question:** If a visitor pays the per area charge at one recreation area, does he/she pay another fee if he/she visits another area that day?

**Answer:** No. The fee paid for the use of day use facilities in an area will permit the use of day use facilities at other recreation areas on the same project and at areas on other projects for that day.

**15. Question:** If a visitor pays a per facility fee at one recreation area (ie \$1 or \$2), does he/she pay the remainder of the per area fee if visiting an area with a per area fee?

**Answer:** Yes. The difference between the per facility and per area fee should be paid. This will discourage users from paying a lower per facility fee for the express purpose of avoiding the higher per area fee.

**16. Question:** If users have reserved a shelter within an area having a per area fee, do they pay the per area fee, too?

**Answer:** The existing guidance in ER 1130-2-550, page 9-4 applies. "(1) Specialized Facility Reservations and Special Events. The charging of a day user fee at a recreation area does not preclude the charging of a fee for the reservation of a specialized facility or for a special event within the area. Neither does the charging of a fee for the reservation of a specialized facility or special event preclude the collecting of the established day user fee for the recreation area. Operations Project managers should consider local situations when determining fee applicability."